

**WEST HIGH SCHOOL CONCERT CHOIR
CURRICULUM 2012-2013
MISS JESSICA HUEY**

Program Goals

1. Provide the best possible musical education and experience for each student.
2. Nurture the personal growth of each student, both as a human being and as a musician.
3. Help students learn the proper singing techniques and demonstrate them in a performance setting.
4. Instill in each student a lifelong appreciation for many different types and styles of music.
5. Assist students in becoming musically literate.
6. Provide students with high quality performance ensembles.
7. Demonstrate proper concert etiquette, both as a performer and audience member.

Course Objectives

1. Participate in quality choral music performance.
2. Increase sight-reading proficiency of music.
3. Understand the historical context of all pieces performed and accurately apply historical performance style.
4. Make aesthetic judgments based on critical listening and analysis.
5. Perform foreign language pieces with proper diction and style.
6. Understand the meaning and emotion of the text and express that meaning and emotion to the audience through performance.
7. Understand basic music theory and musical terminology as they apply to repertoire rehearsed.
8. Continue to develop proper singing technique and learn to apply appropriately to choral singing.
9. Understand the necessity of shaping vowels properly and matching them with the rest of the ensemble in order to create an overall blend.
10. Perform music from a variety of cultures in order to gain a broader worldview.

Fall Concert: Music Around the World

A Jubilant Song

Norman Dello Joio
G. Schirmer, Inc.
SATB

Loch Lomond

Arr. Jonathan Quick
Cypress Publications
SATB-A Cappella

Dirait-On

Morten Lauridsen
Text: Rainer Maria Rilke
Peer Music Classical
SATB

Five Hebrew Love Songs

Eric Whitacre
Text: Hila Plitmann
Walton Music
SATB

Bonse Aba (Traditional Zambian Song)

Arr. Andrew Fischer
Alliance Music Publishing
SATB-A Cappella

Ain't Got Time To Die

Hall Johnson
G. Schirmer, Inc.
SATB-A Cappella

Rationale

The theme of the fall concert, "Music Around the World," allows students to experience music from six very different cultures and provides me the opportunity to teach them the history of the music in those cultures and how to give a historically and stylistically accurate performance of the music. One of the main focuses for this section of the year will be diction. Students will be singing in French, Hebrew, Bemba (the original language of Zambia), as well as English in a Scottish dialect and in the African American Vernacular dialect. We will spend a lot of time working on proper pronunciation of each text in order to provide an accurate representation of what music in all six cultures sounds like.

The first selection, *A Jubilant Song*, is a wonderful piece that starts the program out at home with a very mid-20th century Americana style. The two main focuses with teaching this piece will be rhythm and harmony. It is chalk full of syncopated rhythms and meter changes, as well as pantonal harmonies that will likely be challenging for students as they begin learning the piece. A majority of our rehearsal time on this piece will be spent on perfecting rhythms and isolating chords a cappella rather than with the piano so that students learn to listen across for tuning purposes. This piece also provides the opportunity to showcase a soprano soloist.

Loch Lomond is a great a cappella Scottish folk song that requires students to continue working on listening across for tuning, as in *A Jubilant Song*. With this song, it will also be very important to work on unification of vowel shape in order for chords to lock properly, since the voices are more exposed since they are a cappella. This song is also a great exposure to different textures and timbres. After the tenor soloist, the song begins in a TTBB texture and then moves to an SSAA texture. At this point, I would like to teach the students the nuances of singing in gender-specific textures and the different timbres these textures have in relation to what they sound like in an SATB arrangement. For example, SSAA sounds much younger and brighter compared to the more mature, darker sound women have in an SATB arrangement. These smaller textures allow students to achieve Standard 1. 6.

Dirait-on is a beautiful setting of Rainer Maria Rilke's poems *Les Chansons des Roses*. What is most beautiful about this piece is the way it utilizes melodic word painting. The poem mentions how the petals of a rose envelope and wrap around each other and the piece replicates that with each voice having the melody at several points in the song and they overlap and alternate throughout to create the same effect. This provides the opportunity to teach about the connection between the arts and the importance of text as well as the melodic line. In doing so, Standard 8 will be taught.

Five Hebrew Love Songs is a setting of love notes written in Hebrew on postcards from Hila Plitmann to her husband, Eric Whitacre, who set them to music. This piece also provides the opportunity to teach to Standard 8 about the connection between music and other art forms. This piece expresses the different aspects of love from tenderness to giddy. This provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss how to create contrasts in musical expression through sound, facial expression, and body language.

Bonse Aba is a traditional Zambian folk song that incorporates call and response between the ensemble and a soloist. At this point I will discuss the form of call and response and how it is used within the African tribal culture, which addresses Standard 9.

Ain't Got Time to Die is a fun, upbeat, syncopated spiritual for a cappella voices. This piece allows us to continue working on syncopated rhythms as well as tuning and listening across when singing a cappella. This piece has a much louder dynamic than the previous pieces on the concert, which provides the opportunity to address singing at a forte dynamic in a healthy way without straining or pushing.

Assessment

In order to assess students on rhythmic accuracy for the syncopated rhythms of *A Jubilant Song*, I will select a few pages and have students clap and count the rhythms with a metronome individually. I will allow students to clap the selected pages for me twice, if

needed, and will take the better score out of the two because I understand that it is very difficult to get back on beat if you make a mistake with syncopated rhythms. To assess harmonic accuracy in *A Jubilant Song*, I will have students sing in quartets of one per voice part for the class, evaluating with a rubric. This assessment addresses Standard 1.5 and 1.6 of singing independently in small ensembles music composed for four or more parts.

I plan to assess the musical expression for *Five Hebrew Love Songs* by having a little healthy competition between the class by splitting them up into octets and having them perform the piece for the class. The students will then vote on which group was the most musically expressive and give each other feedback on what they did well and what they can improve on. The winning team will receive extra credit. This assessment will also address Standard 7 when students evaluate and provide feedback for music performed.

After discussing call and response with *Bonse Aba*, I would give an assignment where students would work in groups and compose their own basic call and response piece to teach to the class, which meets Standard 4.

Winter Concert

Personent Hodie

Melody and words from *Piae Cantiones* (1582)
Arr. John Rutter
Hinshaw Music, Inc.
SATB

Nella Fantasia

Music by Ennio Morricone
Italian Lyrics by Chiara Ferrau
Arr. Audrey Snyder
Hal Leonard Corp.
SATB

The Coventry Carol

Traditional 16th Century English Carol
Arr. Victor Cohen Johnson
Lorenz Corporation
SATB

O Magnum Mysterium

Morten Lauridsen
Peer Music Classical
SATB-A Cappella

Go Where I Send Thee

Arr. Paul Caldwell and Sean Ivory
Earthsongs
SATB

Rationale

Personent Hodie is strictly homophonic and performed with a small brass ensemble; which are both different aspects of texture than the students have been exposed to thus far in the year. With this piece, it will be important to discuss the history behind *Piae Cantiones* and what was happening in history in 1582 when it was written, which addresses Standard 9.

Nella Fantasia is a beautiful Italian piece made famous by “Il Divo.” Part of the text translates to, “In my fantasy I see a world of justice, where all people live in peace and honesty.” With such deep and meaningful text, it will be important to teach correct Italian diction so that the purity of the vowels helps to communicate the purity of the piece. It will also be important to continue work with musical expression so that the audience has an idea of the beautiful and heartfelt meaning behind the piece without needing to look at the translation. This piece also features a soprano soloist and violin.

Johnson’s *The Coventry Carol* is a hauntingly beautiful arrangement of the familiar English carol. This piece is excellent for continued work on singing in gender-specific

textures, as introduced with *Loch Lomond*. In order for students to connect to the text, it is important to discuss the history behind the *Coventry Carol* and the meaning of the text, which addresses Standard 9.

When introducing *O Magnum Mysterium*, it will be important to introduce what the timbre of straight-tone singing sounds like when done correctly and how to sing straight-tone in a healthy way without pushing down on the vocal cords to keep them from vibrating. Straight-tone singing is necessary when performing a piece with as thick of a texture as *O Magnum Mysterium* has at times and at the low dynamic it stays at throughout most of the piece. Since the melody of this piece transfers between each vocal part while the rest of the ensemble has counter melodies and dense harmonies, it will be necessary to discuss the importance of bringing your line out if your part has the melody or a moving line.

Go Where I Send Thee is an upbeat spiritual that exposes students to singing gospel. There are a large amount of gospel style modulations within the piece that will require students to learn to listen not only to each other, but also tune in to the piano accompaniment very intently in order to hear the modulations and keep them in tune. The text references several stories from the Bible that are the basis for other African American spirituals. It will be important to address both Standards 8 and 9 by discussing the connections between the piece and the Bible stories, as well as the history of the time periods the Bible stories were from and the history of African American spirituals and how they are based on stories from the Bible.

Assessment

Since *Nella Fantasia*, *Coventry Carol*, *O Magnum Mysterium* and *Personent Hodie* are all pieces that are fairly popular and have been performed in many different arrangements and texture I plan to assess Standards 6 and 7 by playing several recordings of each piece for the class and having them listen and evaluate rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, timbre, form, and musical expression through a rubric that allows them to rate and leave comments on each. This way I can assess their understanding of the concepts and what they are hearing and not hearing when listening to music.

Vocal health is something that is very important to stress over and over to singers, especially young ones. I plan to assess each student's straight-tone singing technique and timbre while working on *O Magnum Mysterium* to make sure they are singing it in a healthy manner. I will either meet with each student for five or ten minutes outside of class during a study hall or pull them out one by one during sectional time to listen and write out specific feedback on producing a healthy tone. This will be very time-consuming, but worth it to preserve the vocal health of my students.

I also plan to assess the students' understanding of melody and the necessity of bringing it into the foreground. This will be a quick in-class assessment where I will simply ask the class to sing through the entire piece, but only sing text when you have the melody or a moving line and ask everyone else to sing on a neutral vowel at a pianissimo level when not singing the melody.

State Large Group Contest

Zigeunerleben (Gypsy Life)

Robert Schumann
Walton Music
SATB

Set Me As A Seal

Richard Nance
Walton Music
SATB

Rationale

Zigeunerleben is a wonderful way to introduce Schumann and early 19th century German music to young singers. Since this will be their first exposure to German diction this semester, it will be important to spend quite a bit of time perfecting the diction for contest. This piece is very “wordy” and tells the story of gypsies in Germany in the early 19th century. It will be very important for the ensemble to know exactly what they are singing and the history of gypsies in order to portray historically accurate musical expression, which incorporates more of Standards 8 and 9.

Set Me As A Seal is a beautiful setting of chapter eight of Song of Solomon in the Bible with piano and French horn. This piece has a very deep dynamic expression to match the depth of the text. As in almost every piece mentioned above, it will be important to focus on Standards 8 and 9 so that students can make historical and literary connections to the piece, rather than just understanding that it is a love song.

Assessment

When introducing *Set Me As A Seal*, I would like to assess Standard 5 by assessing the students’ sight-singing. I plan to assess in sections according to voice part and have students write-in their solfege and then have them sight-sing the piece while only playing chords underneath and see how far they get. Students will already have background experience with sight-singing because they will have sight-singing exercises as bell work at the beginning of each rehearsal.

In order to assess the musical expression of *Set Me As A Seal* and *Zigeunerleben*, as well as make sure they are ready to be performed at contest, I plan to have students split into octets and perform the pieces for the class and have the class evaluate them on rubrics for their dynamic contrast, facial expressions, body language, stage presence, note and rhythm accuracy, and blend. I also plan to video record the octet performances and have the students watch their own performances and complete self-evaluation rubrics with the same criteria.

Spring Concert

Requiem

1. *Requiem aeternam*

John Rutter

Hinshaw Music, Inc.

SATB

Set Me As A Seal

Richard Nance

Walton Music

SATB

Zigeunerleben (Gypsy Life)

Robert Schumann

Walton Music

SATB

The Pasture

Z. Randall Stroope

Text: Robert Frost

Aberdeen Music Inc.

SATB

Blackbird

John Lennon and Paul McCartney

Arr. Daryl Runswick

Hal Leonard

SATB-A Cappella

Cloudburst

Eric Whitacre

Text: Octavio Paz

Walton Music

SATB

Rationale

I chose to program the first movement of John Rutter's *Requiem* because I believe it is important to expose students to large-scale choral works. The necessity for the organ in this piece would be great way for our choir to reach out to the community and perform in a community venue that has an organ for this concert.

I chose to reprogram *Set Me As A Seal* and *Zigeunerleben*, since State Large Group Contest is usually during the middle of a weekday and most parents and community members are unable to attend. This will also be a great way to showcase what the ensemble did to earn the (hopefully) wonderful rating they received at state.

The Pasture is a wonderful setting of Robert Frost's poetry that is very expressive with clear vocal lines and rich harmonies. This piece includes several meter changes, which will allow for a review of rhythm and meter at the end of the school year. Since the meter changes are at a slow tempo, it also provides a great opportunity to work on freedom and motion through the melodic line while singing legato.

Blackbird is a great way to combine all that the ensemble has learned about a cappella singing while singing a fun Beatles classic. The performance of this piece also requires the discussion of Standard 9, again, as it is necessary to understand the historical context of the time period in history when *Blackbird* was written in order to understand its deeper meaning and perform it effectively.

Cloudburst is a piece with the richest texture the ensemble will have encountered throughout the year. The piece includes piano and a large ensemble of auxiliary percussion to create musical imagery of an actual rainstorm. The vocal texture is also larger, as each voice part splits into three in the climactic chord of the piece. The text is a setting of a poem by Octavio Paz that it will be important to understand the meaning of in order to present the text properly (Standard 8). By allowing members of the ensemble to play the auxiliary percussion of this piece and explaining the pedagogy for playing the instruments, we are finally able to achieve Standard 2. Students playing the auxiliary percussion will also experiment with improvising their percussive line in order to create the best possible rainstorm (Standard 3).

Assessment

In order to assess the proper vocal texture for *Cloudburst*, I plan to split the ensemble into sections and have each person experiment with singing all three of the different notes when their lines split into three during the climax. The other sections will also listen and assess and give their feedback on which voicing they believe sounds the best (Standard 6).